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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/09/2034
TAGS: [PINR](#) [PGOV](#) [SA](#)
SUBJECT: (C) SAUDI SHURA COUNCIL (C-ME9-01376)

REF: A. RIYADH 000598
[B.](#) 314/061131-08
[C.](#) 314/34850-07
[D.](#) 314/015829-09
[E.](#) Y-3/00/503374-09
[F.](#) PESHAWAR 00294
[G.](#) 314/019880-08
[H.](#) 314/019251-09
[I.](#) 314/10943-06
[J.](#) GMP20081129614001
[K.](#) RIYADH 001090
[L.](#) RIYADH 001780
[M.](#) JEDDAH 000465
[N.](#) 315/058248-08
[O.](#) 314/54165-07
[P.](#) 314/026301-08

Classified By: SUZANNE MCCORMICK, DIR., INR/OPS. REASON: 1.4(C).

[1.](#) (C/NF) WASHINGTON ANALYSTS ARE INTERESTED IN THE CURRENT RESPONSIBILITIES AND INFLUENCE OF SAUDI ARABIA'S MAJLIS ASH-SHURA, OR SHURA COUNCIL. UNDER A 1992 LAW, THE COUNCIL IS SUPPOSED TO EXERCISE OVERSIGHT OF THE SAUDI GOVERNMENT. THE SAUDI GOVERNMENT INCREASED THE SIZE OF THE COUNCIL TO 150 MEMBERS IN 2005 FROM 120 MEMBERS, AND ITS ROLE APPARENTLY HAS INCREASED AS WELL. ANALYSTS WELCOME ADDITIONAL REPORTING ON THE TOPICS AND QUESTIONS BELOW, AS TIME AND RESOURCES PERMIT.

[A.](#) (C/REL USA, GBR) ON WHAT ISSUES DOES THE KING TAKE THE SHURA COUNCIL'S GUIDANCE MOST SERIOUSLY? ARE THERE ANY ISSUES WHERE THE COUNCIL HAS DE FACTO DECISIONMAKING AUTHORITY?

[B.](#) (C/REL USA, GBR) WHAT IS THE SHURA COUNCIL'S ROLE IN FOREIGN AND ECONOMIC POLICY? CAN SHURA COUNCIL LEADERS COMMIT SAUDI ARABIA TO ANY OBLIGATIONS WHEN THEY MEET WITH FOREIGN OFFICIALS?

[C.](#) (C/REL USA, GBR) ARE THERE ANY SHURA COUNCIL MEMBERS WHO ARE PARTICULARLY CLOSE TO KING ABDALLAH, AND/OR WHOSE ADVICE HE TAKES MOST SERIOUSLY?

[D.](#) (C/REL USA, GBR) WHO ARE THE MOST INFLUENTIAL MEMBERS OF THE SHURA COUNCIL? WHY?

[E.](#) (C/REL USA, GBR) DO ANY OF THE FOLLOWING FORMER SHURA COUNCIL MEMBERS REMAIN INFLUENTIAL AMONG COUNCIL MEMBERS?

1) (C/REL USA, GBR) FORMER SHURA COUNCIL PRESIDENT SALIH BIN HUMAYD (NOW SERVING ON THE SUPREME JUDICIAL COUNCIL)

2) (C/REL USA, GBR) SHAYKH ABD AL-MUHSIN AL-UBAYKAN (NOW AN ADVISOR AT THE ROYAL DIWAN)

3) (C/REL USA, GBR) SHAYKH ALI AL-HAKAMI (NOW A MEMBER OF THE SUPREME ULAMA COUNCIL AND THE SUPREME JUDICIAL COUNCIL)

4) (C/REL USA, GBR) BANDAR AYBAN (NOW HEADS SAUDI HUMAN RIGHTS SOCIETY)

5) (C/REL USA, GBR) MUHAMMAD AL-ZULFA (A FREQUENT COMMENTATOR ON REFORM ISSUES)

1F. (S/NF) WHICH FORMER MEMBERS OF THE SHURA COUNCIL REMAIN CLOSE TO THE KING? DO ANY ATTEND THE KING'S PERSONAL MAJLISES? WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FOLLOWING FORMER SHURA COUNCIL MEMBERS AND THE KING, SAUDI POLITICAL LEADERS, OR OTHER SAUDI GOVERNMENT ENTITIES:

1) (S/NF) ABDALLAH UMAR NASIF AND IBRAHIM JULAYDAN

1G. (C/REL USA, GBR) WHO SERVES ON THE SAUDI-AMERICAN FRIENDSHIP COMMITTEE? WHAT IS ITS ROLE? DOES THE COMMITTEE INFLUENCE SAUDI POLICY RELATING TO THE US ON CULTURAL, TRADE OR OTHER MATTERS? IF SO, HOW?

1H. (C/REL USA, GBR) WHAT IS THE OUTLOOK AND AGENDA OF THE NEW SHURA COUNCIL LEADERSHIP APPOINTED IN EARLY 2009? DO THE SHURA COUNCIL PRESIDENT AND OTHER LEADERS PLAY AN INFLUENTIAL ROLE IN THE WORK OF THE COUNCIL? WHAT ARE COUNCIL MEMBERS' VIEWS OF THE LEADERSHIP?

1I. (C/REL USA, GBR) WHAT IS THE ROLE OF MINISTER OF STATE AND MEMBER OF THE CABINET FOR SHURA COUNCIL AFFAIRS SA'UD BIN SAEED AL-MATHAMI?

1J. (C/REL USA, GBR) WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SHURA COUNCIL AND OTHER SAUDI POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS (E.G., THE ROYAL DIWAN, COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, AND THE ULEMA COUNCIL)?

1K. (S/NF) DO SAUDI POLITICAL LEADERS USE THE SHURA COUNCIL TO INFLUENCE POLICIES?

1L. (C/REL USA, GBR) WHY HAS THE KING INDICATED A PREFERENCE FOR NAMING TECHNOCRATS TO THE COUNCIL? DOES HE EXPECT THE COUNCIL TO OFFER EXPERTISE HE CANNOT GET FROM OTHER SAUDI AGENCIES? WHAT OTHER QUALITIES HAS HE SOUGHT/VALUED IN NAMING PEOPLE TO THE COUNCIL?

1M. (C/REL USA, GBR) HOW AND WHEN ARE SHURA COUNCIL MEMBERS SELECTED AND VETTED? HOW AND WHEN ARE SHURA COUNCIL MEMBERS DISCIPLINED OR CENSORED?

1N. (C/REL USA, GBR) PLEASE REPORT ADDITIONAL BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION ON COUNCIL MEMBERS AS IT BECOMES AVAILABLE.

1O. (C/REL USA, GBR) WHAT ARE THE POLITICAL, IDEOLOGICAL, GEOGRAPHIC, RELIGIOUS, TRIBAL, AND BUSINESS ORIENTATIONS OF THE SHURA COUNCIL MEMBERS? DO CONSERVATIVES OUTWEIGH PROGRESSIVES? DO ANY COUNCIL MEMBERS HOLD EXTREME VIEWS?

1P. (C/REL USA, GBR) WHAT PLANS, IF ANY, DOES THE KING HAVE FOR FURTHER EXPANDING THE COUNCIL'S ROLE AND/OR GIVING IT MORE INDEPENDENT AUTHORITY? RECENT PRESS REPORTS STATE THAT THE SAUDI GOVERNMENT IS NOT CONSIDERING PARTIAL OR FULL ELECTIONS TO THE COUNCIL. WHAT IS THE SENIOR LEADERSHIP'S VIEWS OF A PARTIALLY OR FULLY ELECTED COUNCIL? WHAT DOES THE KING SEE AS OBSTACLES TO AN ELECTED COUNCIL? HOW DO SENIOR AL SAUD FAMILY MEMBERS VIEW AN ELECTED COUNCIL? HOW DO RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENT CLERICS VIEW AN ELECTED COUNCIL OR THE APPOINTMENT OF WOMEN TO THE COUNCIL?

1Q. (S/NF) THE KING QUASHED IN JULY A REQUEST FROM SHURA COUNCIL MEMBERS FOR BUDGET OVERSIGHT. DO SHURA COUNCIL MEMBERS INTEND TO SEEK INCREASED BUDGET OVERSIGHT? WHAT STRATEGY ARE THEY USING TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL? WHAT IS THE LIKELIHOOD OF SUCCESS?

12. (U) PLEASE CITE C-ME9-01376 IN THE SUBJECT LINE OF REPORTING IN RESPONSE TO THE ABOVE QUESTIONS.
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